



THE MONTANIAN

Libby MT 59923

Wednesday

DEC 22 2004

Superior Clipping Service

Glenade MT 406-377-6612

# 40 We might not succeed, but we can still try

Editor:

Mr. Travis Johnson, your letter to the Western News (Dec. 3, 2004) has generated a bit of response. I too would like to respond and provide an observation or two.

When I read your letter, unlike some others it seems, it never crossed my mind that you might be a lawyer. If you are, it's OK, we really need a good one. I thought you might be another concerned

American who is keeping a watchful eye on an American issue, this most immense case of "environmental" toxic exposure to a civilian population in our nation's history.

Or I thought you might be a psychologist seeking insight as to why we would vote for those who have proven to be less than forthcoming with the necessary resources that will help get us be-

yond all this; namely, adequate funding to get our cleanup done in a thorough and timely manner; specialized health care coverage for the exposed; funding for research efforts to proceed and funding to help offset the economic impacts that are very real for our town, which is a designated Superfund site. We get token responses, broken promises and the finest lip service possible.

I can only assume that you have been watching all this for some time since you speculate that under the current administration, W.R. Grace & Co. will walk away nearly unscathed. I for one share your cynicism. We who are involved in these processes have already witnessed a step in the process, one of these so-called investigations: the EPA's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) investigation to figure out what went wrong within EPA that allowed exposures to continue since 1980 when EPA became aware of Libby. Boy, was that a joke! The EPA-OIG reached into their excuse bag, came to Libby and reported to us that EPA has a "communication problem." Well duh! This investigation excused EPA's past failure.

I personally feel that this current so-called criminal investigation is nothing more than another necessary step in the process that will in the end make W.R. Grace pay a fine, and will find that no one should be held accountable for this government-sponsored corporate terrorism — corporate homicide.

On the other hand, if my feeling is wrong — if this is not just smoke and mirrors and justice is sincerely being sought — there will not only be W.R. Grace people facing prosecution, but employees of government agencies at every level of environmental protection, as well as a bunch of politicians. This whole issue should be the

.....  
subject of a congressional investigation.

This may sound a little harsh but I doubt that the person just diagnosed with the incurable cancer, mesothelioma, who is now told he has a life expectancy of 12 to 18 months, would think so.

It seems that most people are not involved in the necessary processes required to make tomorrow's America a better place. Most people don't attend the meetings, where those who are involved will get it right or get it wrong for people today and for future generations. Therefore, people hear from the government spin rooms that the issues are being addressed and made right and if you don't believe it just ask them again and they'll tell you it is.

Also, I think people believe they can count on their elected to make sure that things will be made right for all. Fact is, with few exceptions, our elected officials rarely attend CAG meetings where we publicly discuss the asbestos issues. It seems that many people of Lincoln County are unaware of the battles being fought and who it is that "we the people" have to fight with. Regardless, the need to get this right is great.

Over the past five years many strong and dedicated people have stepped up to the challenge; people like the elderly lady who attends the CAG meetings, who brings her oxygen in a bottle she calls

"Grace"; people like some of our elected champions, ranging from City Councilman George Bauer to Sen. Max Baucus, Sen. Patty Murray and Sen. Hillary Clinton, who have taken up this fight on behalf of common Americans, knowing that Libby and America is deserving; dedicated people like those who have sat on the CAG over these five years who understand that progress equates to lives being saved and misery being spared.

The list of individuals and groups goes on for miles; people who have stepped forward because they were needed. We've come far but there is much more to do and failure is simply wrong.

I can only hope these observations may be helpful to your understanding. I would say that observation is only observation and some things will remain a mystery to me. One such mystery is the fact that, with all considered, Lincoln County voters broke ranks with the entire electorate in the state of Montana with their vote to dot the Montana landscape with cyanide leach ponds. Go figure.

I would thank you and any other American for taking interest, as this is an American issue. Please don't count on us to get this right for ourselves or for America, but you can count on us to try.

Clinton Maynard, Libby